



# EarthWatch Rhode Island



## Hunting: DEM's Pheasant Stocking Program

**Date: November 2, 2007, 1:30 p.m.**

DEM is in the process of releasing 5,000 adult ring-necked pheasants in 12 state wildlife management areas.

Hunting is a popular recreation activity for Rhode Islanders and hunting pheasants is an increasingly popular practice among hunters. Ring-necked pheasants are very colorful, extremely agile and great hide-and-seekers, which test the skills of even the most experienced hunters and their hunting dogs.

The Ring-necked Pheasant was introduced into North America in 1857 from Asia and is established over much of the continent, especially in agricultural lands. However, populations have steadily declined due to changing farming practices and development of agricultural lands.

Initial efforts to increase the population of wild pheasants have been largely unsuccessful as few survive long enough to reproduce. In Rhode Island there are insufficient habitats: large natural grasslands or farms that support the dense cover and hedgerows that pheasants thrive and reproduce in and predator populations take remaining birds. Most pheasants are now raised on farms and stocked by state wildlife agencies to provide a quality game bird for regulated hunting opportunities. Block Island is unique in that habitats there support the only wild pheasants left in Rhode Island.

Pheasant hunting requires the purchase of a special pheasant permit and a Rhode Island hunting license. Revenues from the sale of hunting licenses and pheasant permits pay the entire cost of



**DEM's Brian Tefft is interviewed by Channel 10 Meteorologist R.J. Heim.**

DEM's pheasant program. A permit consists of six pheasant tags that allow hunters to harvest six pheasants, with the requirement that each bird be tagged immediately upon taking. Hunters are allowed to harvest 2 pheasants per day during the season and they may purchase additional permits during the season. . The cost of a pheasant permit is \$15.50 with the funds from the program used to acquire pheasants and assist in habitat management projects across the state.

Rhode Island's pheasant hunting season began on

### Benefits of Hunting

- Hunting contributes to the Rhode Island economy – the 2006 Survey of National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation estimated that hunters spent \$10 Million dollars on hunting related items in that year
- The hunting license fee system finances wildlife management and habitat and open space protection
- Hunting is a necessary tool in wildlife management in order to maintain healthy and diverse populations of wildlife.
- Hunting instills within individuals a personal accountability for Rhode Island's natural resources

October 20, 2007 and will run through January 20, 2008. This season 80% of these pheasant will be stocked between opening day and November 27, with the remainder of the pheasant stocked during the late season that begins on December 10.

Pheasant stocking will occur at several locations on major wildlife management areas including Arcadia, Great Swamp, Carolina, Durfee Hill, Black Hut, Buck Hill, Sapowet, Nicholas Farm, Big River and the Eight-Rod Farm management areas. Hunter check stations have detailed maps of the best hunting areas available in the management areas.

### **Important Safety Reminder!**

The Department of Environmental Management reminds all Rhode Islanders that, for safety reasons, they must wear fluorescent orange when in state management areas now that hunting season has opened. State regulations require that **all users** of management areas, including bikers, hikers, and horseback riders, must wear at least 200 square inches of solid daylight-fluorescent orange throughout the small game hunting season, which opened October 20 and closes February 29, 2008, as well as during the spring turkey season that runs from April 24 to May 31, 2008. The minimum requirement of orange clothing for all users increases to 500 square inches during the shotgun deer season that runs from December 1 to December 9.



**Brian Tefft, sporting a fluorescent orange safety cap, prepares to release pheasants.**

Safety regulations mandate the use of fluorescent orange; other fluorescent colors, such as lime or yellow, do not satisfy the safety requirement. Safety clothing must also be worn above the waist and must be visible in all directions. Examples that meet the orange requirements are a hat that covers 200 square inches or a combination of a hat and a vest covering 500 square inches.

**Interview:** Brian Tefft, Principal Wildlife Biologist, DEM